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SUCCESS STORY

Trade Group Expands Farmers' Options

Association introduces new, more profitable agricultural practices



Photo: USAID/CAR/Mahabbat Alymkulova

More than 1,300 farmers annually attend demonstrations by a USAID-supported agricultural association to learn about new technologies.

“Now we are looking for information on new technologies ourselves, as it improves the quality of our lives,” said Asanov Nimatulla, a farmer from Kara-Su village.

Telling Our Story
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Following the fall of the Soviet system, Kyrgyz agricultural businesses lost not only their markets for produce, but networks that provided quality seeds, fertilizers or crop protection products. For years, Kyrgyz farmers struggled with poor quality seeds, and fertilizers and pesticides that were very costly, if available at all. Despite their hard work, farmers earned little from agriculture.

With USAID assistance, agrobusinessmen in southern Kyrgyzstan formed the Association of Agrobusinessmen of Kyrgyzstan (AAK). The association set out to create an opportunity for farmers and agribusinesses to cooperate in procuring and distributing quality seeds, fertilizers, and crop protection products.

USAID helps the association conduct demonstrations of new crops and agricultural techniques in various districts of southern Kyrgyzstan. These demonstrations enable farmers to see the crops in the field and obtain firsthand information about their care from specialists. The association presents different varieties and hybrids of wheat, maize, potato, cotton and vegetables, seeds for which are obtained from local seed companies as well as international organizations.

In addition to presenting information on crops, fertilizers, and crop protection products in the field, seminars also demonstrate the comparative advantages of new technologies. Participants have the opportunity to evaluate the results of new crops and compare them with traditionally grown ones. Interested farmers can purchase the seeds of demonstrated crops at AAK farm stores and seed farms.

The association carried out nine demonstrations in three districts, which provided farmers with information on modern ways to increase productivity and profitability from their land. More than 1,300 farmers, seed dealers, AAK members, representatives of state seed department and international organizations attend the demonstrations annually. “In Soviet times we used to have other people think for us. Now we are independent, we can choose our own way of life,” said Asanov Nimatulla, a farmer with 30 years of experience.